

problems are also an invitation for others to open up discussion about the full diversity of Iowa regionalism.

The State Historical Society of Iowa posthumously awarded E. Bradford Burns the 1997 Benjamin F. Shambaugh Award, recognizing *Kinship with the Land: Regionalist Thought in Iowa, 1894-1942* as the most significant book on Iowa history published in 1996.

Radio Priest: Charles Coughlin, The Father of Hate Radio, by Donald Warren. New York and London: The Free Press, 1996. ix, 376 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, index. \$27.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DAVID R. MCMAHON, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

One might have thought that Alan Brinkley had said all there was to say about the life of Charles Coughlin. His prize-winning book, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (1982), broke new ground in taking the ideas and methods of depression-era political fringe groups seriously. But Donald Warren, a professor of sociology and anthropology at Oakland University, has taken us one step further with what is perhaps the definitive study of Coughlin, *Radio Priest: Charles Coughlin, The Father of Hate Radio*.

Warren argues that we need to look no further than the life of Father Coughlin to understand the history of hate or talk radio and much of the televangelism of our time. Father Coughlin perfected the formula of politically oriented talk radio and created one of the most powerful electronic communities ever to exert its force on the American political system. The author recounts the story of how one parish priest emerged from obscurity to command the attention of millions of listeners and the ear of some of the most powerful political leaders of his time. Until they broke away from him, Coughlin was a confidant of Joseph Kennedy, Detroit mayor Frank Murphy, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, among others. Warren claims that Coughlin virtually ended President Herbert Hoover's political career with his powerful on-air attacks. Democrats rewarded him with an invitation to speak at the 1932 Democratic Convention. Intoxicated by power, Coughlin's own excesses led to his downfall and his somewhat belated silencing by the Catholic Church in 1942. His break with Roosevelt in 1936, and his increasingly strident anti-Semitism late in the decade, marked the fall of this once popular priest.

Although *Radio Priest* does not have the same literary quality as Brinkley's *Voices of Protest*, it does provide a more detailed picture of the famous priest. In writing the book, the author uses the recently opened Coughlin files in the archives of the Archdiocese of Detroit and synthesizes an impressive number of oral interviews and other research conducted over a period of more than twenty years. The writing and publication of the book also capitalizes on current events, as the title suggests. The movement for a third party, the increasing relevance of talk radio to political events, and the reported incidents of violence perpetrated by fringe movements were all present in Father Coughlin's day.

But that is not to say that the author is completely persuasive in labeling Coughlin the "Father of Hate Radio." To fully prove his claim we need to know more about how Coughlin compares with contemporaries (like FDR) and others since who have used radio for political purposes. Put simply, too much history from 1942 to the 1980s is left unexplained. One suspects that the exigencies of marketing the book interfered with the writing of its thesis. I highly recommend the book, however, to all those who study the period, because no better biography of Coughlin exists. Some Hoover scholars will be especially interested in those pages that mention the former president and his most vocal critic. Most noteworthy are the book's explorations of anti-Semitism and anti-Communism and its discussion of Catholic teachings on social questions.

Mrs. Ike: Memories and Reflections on the Life of Mamie Eisenhower, by Susan Eisenhower. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996. xix, 392 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$26.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BARBARA MCGOWAN, RIPON COLLEGE

Mrs. Ike is a biography of Mamie Eisenhower written by her granddaughter, Susan Eisenhower. Not surprisingly, the book, which concentrates on private life and draws on numerous family letters and personal interviews, presents Mamie as a devoted wife, loving mother and grandmother, and gregarious friend. Susan, who is president of the Eisenhower Group (a family-run foundation) and chair of the Center of Post Soviet Studies, states rather defensively that Mamie's virtues are no longer valued by American society, but that Mamie herself was always "centered, confident and unapologetic about who she was" (xvii).

Mamie Geneva Doud was born November 14, 1896, in Boone, Iowa, to John Doud, a prosperous manager of a family-owned meat-

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.